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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes a self-directed job-search plan that works for older adults. First, the publication contrasts a self-directed job search with a typical job search. Then the brochure outlines the basic steps the job seeker needs to take: (1) assessing oneself with regard to interests, skills, work environment, and potential employment barriers; (2) setting employment goals; (3) assessing the job market; (4) networking; (5) informational interviewing; and (6) job seeking, including applications, resume, cover letter, interview, and salaries. Other topics include employment agencies and the following working options: sabbaticals, phased retirement, part-time work, job-sharing, flextime/seasonal work, working for a temporary agency, and volunteer work. Those qualities that older workers can bring to the workplace are also highlighted. A final section recommends resources for further developing abilities in the areas of job search and changing careers and lifestyles and lists employment programs offered by national organizations, state resources, and volunteer opportunities. (YLB)

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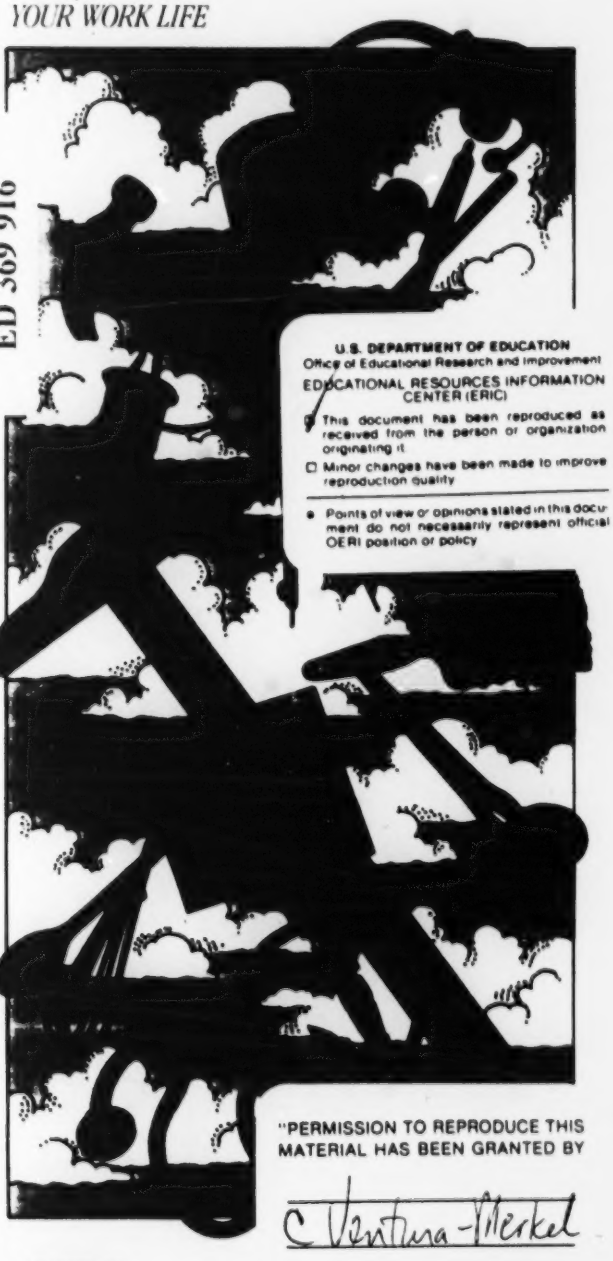
Working Options

How to Plan:
YOUR JOB SEARCH
YOUR WORK LIFE



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AARP

LOOKING FOR A JOB?

You're not alone. More than 40 million people in the United States are looking for jobs right now.

If you're like the typical job seeker, you read the help-wanted ads, ask friends and relatives about job openings, apply to personnel departments, and check out employment agencies.

Maybe you'll get lucky and find a job right away. With even more luck, you might find a job that suits your skills, talents and interests — *and* pays the salary you want! If that happens, you're no longer typical. The typical job search can take weeks or months. It's tough work and can be very discouraging. The "No, you're not what we're looking for" response is hard on your ego. You may begin to feel frustrated, angry, hopeless and depressed. By the time a job offer comes along, you're ready to take almost anything. You may wind up in a job that isn't what you really want. Before long, you're looking through the help-wanted ads again.

No wonder people hate to look for work!

Perhaps you're ready to try a different approach — one that has proved successful time and time again . . .

Older workers have work experience that has given them specialized knowledge and skills.

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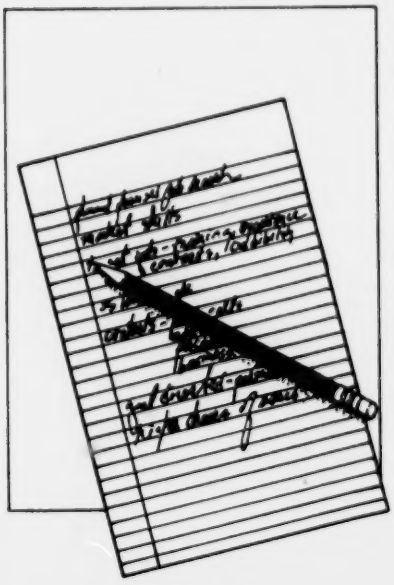
THE PLAN

This is a self-directed job-search plan that works. It has a high success rate in finding a job based on your needs, interests, skills and abilities. It works because *you* decide what your employment goals are, *you* are responsible for planning your job search, and *you* continue the job search until you find the job *you* want!

Whether you are seeking paid employment for the first time in 20 years or are a retired professional with years of work force experience, you can learn the job-search skills needed to change jobs, change careers or enter the work force. The plan is an effective tool for the person who wants to continue being productive in the work force, earn more income, meet social needs and contribute skills and talents to the community.

Intelligence, memory, and learning capacity remains constant for most persons until at least age 70—for many, even longer.



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Let's take a look at the differences between a self-directed job search and a typical job search.

In the typical job search	*In the Work/Life Plan*
You use a scattered approach with little direction or focus.	You conduct a planned, focused job search.
You have little control over the skills used in a job.	You market only the skills you want to use in your job.
You may not get the job you want, only a job that pays the bills.	You target the job you want. However, sometimes it's necessary to take a "first-step" job to get the training, experience, contacts and professional credibility that leads to your desired career goal.
You average three to five hours a week job hunting.	You average 35 hours a week job hunting.
You average six contacts per week.	You increase your contacts over the course of your search, using phone calls, ads, personal and business contacts — "networks."
You become desperate, discouraged and accept any reasonable job offer.	You are goal-directed and persevere until you get the job you want.
You have only limited success.	You have a higher chance of success.

By developing and following your own plan, you can achieve the goal of a more fulfilling, satisfying work life.

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A STRATEGY FOR SUCCESS

In developing your job-search and work-life plan, you will assess yourself to develop realistic employment goals, assess the job market in your community and learn valuable job-search techniques. You may want to explore creative working options. This brochure outlines the basic steps you need to take and recommends resources for further developing your abilities in these areas.

Older workers measure up—productivity in most jobs is as high as other age groups.

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ASSESSING YOURSELF

This is one of the most crucial elements of your job search. Take a few minutes to visualize your dream job. What skills do you have and enjoy using most? How can you transfer them to a work setting? Jot down your answers:

INTERESTS: What do you enjoy? What have you always wanted to do? Consider your hobbies, sports and volunteer activities, cultural and civic interests, etc.

Older workers care about the quality of their work: they are loyal, dedicated, reliable employees.

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SKILLS: What do you do best? There are three types of skills you must identify: self-management skills (personality strengths such as industriousness, loyalty and accuracy), transferable skills that transfer to many careers (skills such as decision-making, communicating and organizing) and job-content skills (specific job-related skills such as accounting, welding and operating computers).

Do you have volunteer, military or other experience? What kinds of machines can you operate? If you don't have the skills you need, do you have the potential and motivation to be trained for them?

WORK ENVIRONMENT: Do you prefer: To work alone or with others? Close supervision or setting your own pace? A familiar routine or change and variety?

POTENTIAL EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS: Do you have adequate transportation? Any health limitations? Is the work you want available in your geographic area? Do you need more training?

Define your strongest, most marketable skills, assess your unique qualities, and decide what is important to you in your work environment. Talk over your answers with trusted friends and relatives for suggestions.

There are also community resources available such as free career counseling, vocational testing and job-search assistance. (See the list of resources on pages *25-27.*)

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SETTING EMPLOYMENT GOALS

After your self-assessment, set *realistic* employment goals. Choose two or three jobs you would like to do, for which you have or can develop the necessary skills, and which meet your income and work environment expectations.

List the jobs in order of preference. Don't limit yourself to specific job titles such as secretary, salesperson, truck driver. Remember—you have a flexible and unique combination of skills, interests and personality to market to an employer. This will give you a much broader range of jobs to choose from.

Many older workers want to continue working—retirement is only one option.

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ASSESSING THE JOB MARKET

After assessing yourself and defining your employment goals, begin to research organizations and businesses that employ people with your skills. Explore both traditional and "hidden" job markets. The traditional job market includes newspapers, personnel departments and employment agencies.

The "hidden" job market requires some creative thinking. Here are some ideas:

☐ Business sections of newspapers for new and expanding businesses.

☐ Yellow Pages for companies that employ people with skills like yours.

☐ Local Chamber of Commerce for publications like the *Manufacturer's Directory*.

☐ Former co-workers, employers or supervisors who know about job openings *before* they are posted.

☐ Friends, relatives and acquaintances — and *their* friends, relatives and acquaintances. Tell them you are job hunting and ask them to call you with any leads.

☐ Community and religious groups also can become part of your business network.

☐ College placement offices and membership associations, professional and trade publications can provide information, ideas and more contacts.

Older workers bring mature judgment, good basic skills, and experience with people to the job.

Now you should have a list of potential employers that you are interested in. Develop a file for each of them. Add information about the size of the company or organization, its philosophy, history, products and work force. You will need this information for the next two steps — networking and informational interviewing.

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NETWORKING

You've been networking for years. How do you find a dentist or someone to repair your car? You ask friends, neighbors, relatives, co-workers and others. Now you can use this technique to reach your employment goal.

While job hunting can be hard, lonely work, your *personal network*—friends, family and former co-workers—can give emotional support *and* help with job leads, resumes and interviewing techniques.

Look into the possibility of a job club. They are comprised of job seekers who meet regularly to share job leads, information, assistance and support, and to receive training in job-search techniques. Ask your religious or civic group to sponsor a job club.

Begin to increase your *business network* by compiling a list of companies and organizations for which you'd like to work and the names and titles of people there whom you can contact for informational interviews. Add to your list when you talk to these people by asking if they can refer you to anyone else as knowledgeable at they are.

Get in touch, and stay in touch, with everyone in your networks. They all have the potential to help you find the person who can hire you for the job you want.

Make it easy for people to do you favors. When you ask someone to write a letter of recommendation or introduction, provide the name, title and address of the recipient and some ideas about which of your skills and qualities

Older workers have constantly adapted to change — in family, work, and the world.

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you would like to have highlighted. Remember to reciprocate. Return favors and send thank-you notes to those who have been helpful.

A strong, viable network is one of your best resources. Each person you meet in your job search may be a source of new leads. As you may already suspect, the majority of good, sought-after jobs never makes it into the classifieds. They go to people with "contacts."

Now you have contacts, too, and will be making many new ones. Make it a point to speak to everyone you know, and everyone you meet, about the kind of job you are looking for.

Networks are also helpful *after* you get the job. Always keep your network strong and alive. It's your link to future success.

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INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEWING

Now it's time to put some proven job-search tools to work for you. Informational interviewing helps focus your job search on well-chosen potential employers.

Using your network, contact people within organizations that interest you. Set up appointments with people who are doing the kind of work you'd like to do. This gives you a chance to see if you would enjoy working there. Ask about the organization's goals and about the organizational plans to meet them. Also assess the needs of the organization. How would your skills be helpful there?

In the informational interviewing phase, *you* are the one asking the questions, i.e., interviewing the company. Your task is to survey targeted employers, then make an informed decision about which employer and job suits your needs and uses your skills. During this process you may receive job offers. If so, tell them the job sounds intriguing and after you have completed your employer research phase, you would like to get back to them. Once you have made a decision, you can follow up on job offers by asking your contacts for the names of people to call for a *hiring* interview.

Don't sell yourself short by taking the first job that's offered. Remember, your goal is to find the job that uniquely fits your skills and interests.

Older workers have fewer accidents on the job than other age groups.

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APPLICATIONS: Some employers allow you to complete job applications at home; others do not. To be prepared, always carry an index card with all of your employment-related information on it — social security number, last three employers' names, addresses, phone numbers and dates of employment with them. You may want to keep a job-search folder containing your index card, copies of resumes, and business cards in a handy place — briefcase, desk, car, etc.

THE RESUME: Your resume is your calling card in the job search. It should intrigue the potential employer and create interest for more information.

Your resume should:

☐ Be brief. Say only what you need to say on one page.

☐ Be organized. List your skills into appropriate categories. Then list your places of employment.

☐ Give adequate information. Job titles and dates alone will not do.

☐ Be results oriented. Highlight what you accomplished on each job.

☐ Omit personal information such as age, height, weight and marital status.

☐ Be proofread carefully. Mistakes can cost you a job.

☐ Be typed or typeset and of professional quality.

Older worker attendance records are equal to or better than most other age groups.

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Search libraries and bookstores for books on how to write a resume. (The list of resources on pages *25-28* will help.) You also may want to ask a career counselor to review your resume and cover letter.

THE COVER LETTER: Use a cover letter with your resume as a personalized message to the employer. In composing it, you should:

☐ Address the letter to the person, by name and title, who can make the hiring decision.

☐ Communicate something personal in your opening line to show that you are familiar with the organization. Informational interviewing provides this data.

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☐ Show how your skills will help the employer, e.g., generate income, improve customer satisfaction or increase productivity.

☐ Use the language of the field to which you are applying.

☐ As you close, ask for an interview. Follow up in a few days with a phone call.

This is no time to be modest. You are selling the employer on *you*—your skills and your ability to use them to the employer's advantage. Avoid labelling yourself as a salesperson, draftsman, etc. Market your skills, not a title.

THE INTERVIEW: The interview is your opportunity to make your valuable qualities clear to an employer. Assessing your skills and selecting employment goals will enable you to walk into an interview knowing what job you want and how your skills can help the organization meet its goals and needs.

Your self-confidence will be reflected in your appearance and body language. Just as you have assessed your marketable skills, you must also assess your "image." Many employers have a stereotyped image of older job-seekers. To overcome this barrier, take special care to project a healthy, energetic image.

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Be aware of clothes, hairstyles and business appearance of employees during your informational interviews and at other places of business. There are many books and magazines on the market that address the issues of how to present a positive image in the world. Appearance does count. Make your first impression work for you.

Be sure your answers are clear, concise and relevant to the questions. Emphasize the positive aspects of your age — work ethic, loyalty, good health, high energy, enthusiasm, maturity and flexibility.

Look at the interview from the employer's point of view. Employers usually ask questions that fit into these broad categories:

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Questions employers want answered	***How you respond —points you want to make***
Why did you choose this organization?	You have done your informational interviewing and can speak knowledgeably about the organization, its goals and how those goals match yours.
What can you do for me?	You know what the organizational needs are and how you can meet them.
Have you done this kind of work before?	Respond with brief, to-the-point descriptions of how a skill you used before relates directly to the employer's needs.
Will you fit in here?	The employer may be concerned about your fitting in with younger workers, taking direction from a younger supervisor, or coping with a hectic pace. Mention briefly and in a positive way the jobs where you worked in these situations. Emphasize that you respect the supervisor's *role* and you evaluate people based on ability, not age.
How much will hiring you cost me?	Check the salary range before the interview. Try to postpone salary questions until a job offer has been made.

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Give the employer every reason to hire you:

☐ Be on time.

☐ Take care with your appearance.

☐ Give a firm handshake.

☐ Speak up and make eye contact.

☐ Be confident, positive, and have a "can-do" attitude.

☐ Send a thank-you note to the interviewer immediately after the interview.

☐ Review your performance and note any changes needed.

If you are told that no jobs are currently available, call back every few weeks to check on new openings. Most firms are favorably impressed by friendly perseverance and eagerness to work.

Interviewing skills improve with practice. Ask friends and relatives to practice with you.

SALARIES: Be prepared to discuss salary during your interview. Gather information about local rates of pay from employment agencies and other network resources. Low entry-level positions usually advertise hourly salaries with job descriptions. For mid- and upper-level positions, salaries are usually discussed at a second or third interview.

Most employers have a pay *range* in mind. You must negotiate to get the highest end of that range. (See the resources list on pages *25-28* for books on negotiating.)

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EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

The amount of work you must do to get the job you want may seem overwhelming. Why not turn that work over to someone else? Finding the *right* job for you takes time, patience and hard work. This is too important to turn over to someone else, unless you are an active partner, making the important decisions about your goals and how to reach them.

As a careful consumer, you want to be assured that anyone assisting you in a job search has *your* best interests at heart. Do they take the time to find out what *you* want to do? Or do they just arrange interviews? Who are they really working for — you or the employer?

In the end, no one can get you a job but you.

Older workers are capable decision-makers and problem solvers.

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YOUR WORKING OPTIONS

The changing needs of employers, the increasing number of older workers who are living longer, healthier lives, and the variety of ways people use their time are affecting the way in which work fits into our lives.

People are changing the traditional patterns of work and retirement. They are re-entering the work force several times throughout their lives, interweaving work and leisure time activities.

These changes will be easier to adjust to, and take advantage of, if you are aware of how they affect your life and if you plan for them. If you are currently working full time, you may want to consider some other working options.

SABBATICALS: You may want to consider taking a sabbatical, if possible, usually a few months to one year away from your present job. Sometimes salary continues as an employee benefit. Or you may be able to retire for a few years, then retrain and return to work.

PHASED RETIREMENT: If you are close to retirement now, consider retiring gradually by reducing work time without decreasing your pension benefits. Phased retirement offers employees the chance to make a gradual adjustment to retirement. It allows employers to continue using trained, loyal and experienced employees.

Older worker's health and benefits costs are the same or lower than other age groups.

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PART-TIME WORK, JOB-SHARING: Explore part-time work. Some companies offer the option of staying on part-time to assist with job-training, fill in for absent staff, or help with special projects. Some offer job-sharing opportunities — two part-time employees share one full-time slot.

FLEXTIME, SEASONAL WORK: Flextime programs give employees some say in what hours they want to work, e.g., they may work four ten-hour days, then have one day off. Seasonal work allows for working only at certain times of the year, when the employer's workload is heaviest.

WORKING FOR A TEMPORARY AGENCY: Working for an agency that places full- and part-time workers with companies on a temporary basis is an excellent way to "preview" different work environments. It also helps you acquire additional training, recent work experience, and more contacts for your network.

VOLUNTEER WORK: Volunteer work can help you develop skills, experience and contacts for employment. (Groups that offer regular volunteer opportunities are listed on page 27.)

In the long-range planning of your work life, you may find it helpful to look at each job more critically. Will it provide you with more experience, training and skills? Does it provide you with the opportunity to grow in ways that will benefit you and some future employer? Work and leisure time are assuming more importance in your life. *Planning* can be the vehicle that allows you to have control of, and take responsibility for, the quality of your life.

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A FINAL WORD ON AGE AND EMPLOYMENT

As an older worker, you bring a unique combination of skills, maturity and expertise to the workplace. You are part of a generation that has a strong, positive work ethic. You bring valuable qualities to the labor force, and you have a performance record of demonstrated ability. You know how to work with other people and how to handle responsibility as a result of years of experience.

You might have become discouraged by attitudes some employers have toward older workers; there *is* age discrimination in the workplace. However, the very qualities employers want in any employee are the ones in which older workers excel. For example:

Employers are looking for employees with these qualities	***As an older worker, you can emphasize these qualities***
Low turnover — employees who stay with them (eliminates need to train new employees).	You're looking for a job with stability. On the average, older workers stay at a job three times longer than younger workers.
Less absenteeism.	You are reliable, miss fewer days and are punctual.
Good basic skills.	You have good basic math, spelling and writing skills. You bring years of experience and mature judgment to the job.

Older workers stay an average of 15 years on a job.

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Conscientiousness, industriousness.	You have superb self-management skills. You give a full day's work for a full day's pay. You take pride in and care about the quality of your work.
Loyalty to the organization.	One of your best traits! You identify with the organization and feel a strong sense of responsibility to contribute.
Ability to get along well with co-workers and customers.	You have years of experience learning "people" skills. You know how to cooperate, collaborate and negotiate.
Flexibility and "grace under pressure."	Piece of cake! After all these years of crises, deadlines and plans that go awry, from family situations to world wars, you've learned a few coping mechanisms. You've survived by learning to adapt to new situations.

So remember, you and your peers are better educated, more highly trained and skilled than any generation before you. You are healthier, more active and have a longer life expectancy. You still have much to contribute to the workplace, community and country.

RESOURCES

JOB SEARCH

These books can help you with all aspects of your job search — self-assessment, using the hidden job market, informational interviewing, resumes, interviews, salary negotiations, etc.

The Damn Good Resume Guide. By Yana Parker, 1983. Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707.

What Color Is Your Parachute? By Richard N. Bolles. 1993 edition. Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707. (Look for "the New Quick Job-Hunting Map.")

The Complete Job-Search Handbook: All the Skill You Need to Get Any Job and Have a Good Time Doing It. Howard Figler, Ph.D., Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1988.

Who's Hiring Who? How to Find That Job Fast! Richard Lathrop. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA 1989.

Out-Interviewing the Interviewer: A Job Winner's Script for Success. Stephen K. Merman and John E. McLaughlin. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1983.

Getting a Job After 50. John S. Morgan. Petrocelli Books, Princeton, NJ, 1987.

The Right Place at the Right Time: Finding the Right Job in the New Economy. Robert Wegmann and Robert Chapman. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA, 1990.

Sweaty Palms. H. Anthony Medley. Ten Speed Press, Berkeley, CA, 1992.

The Only Job-Hunting Guide You'll Ever Need: The Most Comprehensive Guide for Job Hunters and Career Switchers. Kathryn and Ross Petras. Poseidon Press, New York, 1989.

CHANGING CAREERS AND LIFESTYLES

These books can help with self-motivation career, attitude, etc.

Careering and Re-Careering for the 1990's: The Complete Guide to Planning Your Future. Ronald L. Krannich, Ph.D., Impact Publications, Manassas, VA. 1989.

The Three Boxes of Life: And How to Get Out of Them: By Richard N. Bolles. 1981. Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707.

Wishcraft: How to Get What You Really Want. By Barbara Sher and Annie Gottlieb. 1979. Direct Mail Order: Viking-Penguin, 299 Murray Hill Parkway, East Rutherford, NJ 07073.

Work in the New Economy: Robert Wegmann, Robert Chapman, and Miriam Johnson. American Association for Counseling and Development, Alexandria, VA. 1989.

Plan B: Protecting Your Career from the Winds of Change. Elwood N. Chapman. Crisp Publications, Inc., Los Altos, CA. 1988.

EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The following national organizations offer job-search assistance, career counseling and/or vocational testing to eligible applicants.

AARP Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), 601 E Street, NW, Washington, DC 20049.

Job Training Partnership Act. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20036.

Forty Plus (40 +), 1718 P Street, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Displaced Homemakers, 1625 K Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, D.C. 20005

Operation Able, 36 South Wabash, Chicago, IL 60603.

AARP Works, Employment Planning Program, Work Force Education, Worker Equity Department, 601 E Street, Washington, D.C. 20049.

*STATE RESOURCES**

These resources offer career counseling, vocational testing, and job-search assistance to eligible applicants, or they can refer you to agencies that provide such services.

Community and Vocational Colleges (Continuing education departments and career centers)

Area Agencies on Aging (Senior information and referral services)

Senior Centers

Public Libraries

State Employment Commission

* Check your phone book for state and local programs and listings.

*VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Working as a volunteer gives you the opportunity to perfect or learn new skills, such as: answering phones, bookkeeping, typing, word processing, peer counseling, public relations, public speaking, chairing committees, etc. Below are just some of the organizations that work with volunteers.

AARP Volunteer Talent Bank

Voluntary Action Centers

League of Women Voters

Medical organizations (Red Cross; hospitals; nursing homes; mental health clinics, etc.)

Girl and Boy Scouts

Big Brothers and Big Sisters

Senior Centers

National Domestic Violence Prevention Centers (To prevent spousal abuse/domestic violence.)

Parents Anonymous (To prevent child abuse.)

Humane Society (Or other animal protection leagues.)

Horticulture or garden clubs

Other local religious, civic and political organizations

* Check your phone book for state and local listings.

ADDITIONAL COPIES

For additional copies of this pamphlet, write to the address below. Specify the title, "Working Options: How to Plan Your Job Search, Your Work Life" and AARP Stock Number PW 3671 (493)•D12403

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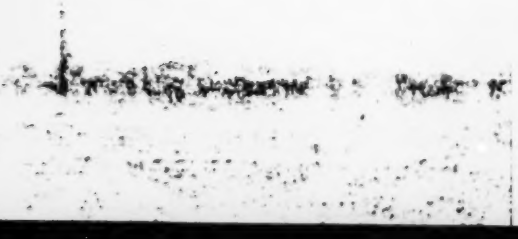

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